

August 31, 2023

Dear Peg,

I am well aware (far more than you realize) of what your mother did to you and I sympathize and understand. I never held you accountable or responsible for the actions of your mother or your brother, except that you went along with his little game of doling out my past and what was rightfully mine to me in bits and pieces over four decades.

But.....

How amazing that a family so firmly convinced of its intellectual and moral superiority, so sure of itself that it cast off its own spiritual heritage, and dismissed all others as religious simpletons and goyim or schvartze could never see the right thing to do.

How astounding that a man, so convinced of his own correctness, that he wouldn't talk to people for years because of the way they voted —or perhaps disagreed with him about Stalin—a man so positive that he and only *he* knew what was correct, who wrote hundreds of letters to newspapers correcting every one else about minor points of history, saw wrong and not only did not stop it, but went along with it.

How remarkable that a family in which most of the members from the terrible matriarch on down were involved in teaching children, didn't know how to treat, respect or give credit to its own children.

How incredible that in a family where the departed daughter was worshipped not as a person, but some sort of intellectual goddess remembered for her brilliance instead of her human attributes as a person,

could her choice of a husband not be trusted with the keepsakes of their life together.

But as for Mark, a truly pitiful creature who has chosen or more accurately (and I'm being sympathetic) was *conditioned* to miss out on the majority of life's wonders and joys, there is little that can be said. He is as worthy of a Hitchcock movie as any fictional character.

A man whom at age 47 did what he was told to do without thinking about it! A man who while gleefully telling everyone within earshot what was right and wrong, not only watched, but aided and abetted his mother in pillaging, stealing and denying his own sister's children of what was theirs by birthright! A man who after hoarding these items for his own gratification for decades then chooses to give them back to me in bits, pieces and chapters, while in his typical sanctimonious way, expects me to be grateful.

As old as he is, I think he knows full well what he did and what was taken. His mind works that way, a mind of details instead of emotions. For years I withheld my rage from him because he had turned into this little old man. But his mind is still keen and alert, and his petulant stubbornness is still very much in evidence.

For all my life I was told by your mother, my mother and you, "He means well." Well as much as I hate to use a cliché, nothing applies to him more than "The road to hell is paved with good intentions."

The unfortunate truth about Mark is no one ever called him on his shit. He was either dismissed as eccentric or crazy, but presumably harmless. And he got away with it his entire life, and as a result of that you are unfortunately now paying for that with what he has done to your home. But that is the way he is and the way he has always been.

But regardless of his mother, Mark was a full-grown man at the time of these despicable acts, and so he must be held accountable. If this were a

legal case, he would be an accessory plain and simple. He knew theft was taking place, and he did *nothing* to stop it.

Unfortunately these are the facts.

Your mother unfortunately never *got* that when a child moves out of the house and marries that that child is now on its own and starting its own family. She just never could fathom that. And as you well know, no one was good enough for any of her children. And because she didn't get that, she took and took and took again what wasn't hers to take. And Mark went along with it. He didn't have the the guts or the conscience to say to her this is *wrong*.

What none of you ever got it that my mother is my heart. I am fully aware of who she was, what she did, as well as her exalted (by her brother) brilliance. But to me, she was my mom, and I was her son, and her scholastic achievements and all that other stuff that the Stone family insists is so important *is* and always will be secondary. It has little to do with who she was to me.

But the Stone family with its perpetual promotion of false achievements couldn't possibly grasp that. The person inside meant nothing and means nothing. And that along with several other things is what more than likely drove every child except for one away from 1039 Wyoming Avenue. And for the one who stayed, those kinds of achievements are the only kind he's ever known and the only kind he recognizes sad as that may be. But in real life, in the real world, when you get down to it, that stuff don't mean shit.

But, I realize you were a victim of that. And perhaps Mark was a victim as well. You tried for a while perhaps to distance yourself from it. Mark never did.

Some of your recounting of history is wrong, but I will let that pass. I remember *everything*.

Unfortunately my mother's one great failing was she didn't have the heart to tell her mother to get lost.

As to last week, when I saw that yearbook sitting in the table in your foyer, I knew what it was *immediately*. And many times over the years I wondered what had happened to it. But for whatever reason it never occurred to me, never dawned on me that this too was among the "taken" items with the pots, the pans, the glasses, and everything else. But this, this was something I *knew* without any doubt was in my house. This was a book I had looked at many times when I was a kid. And so it hit me more powerfully than ever just what wrongs were committed.

And your comment to me was way out of line. You don't have a clue who I am, what I think or how I feel. You blithely assume I wouldn't still have had it. I still have books my mother and father gave me when I was a kid. You had no right to make that comment or assumption.

But in the end, your mother and your brother could only think that they lost a daughter and a sister and their reaction was selfishness at its maximum. They didn't ever once stop to think about the two children who had lost a mother (in my view a far more horrible occurrence, though I realize how terrible it is for a parent to lose a child, or the loss of any family member or close friend) and oh so typical of them, they didn't even consider the husband who lost a wife, not to mention a soulmate and the love of his life. Because that family and those two people in particular didn't know about love and how to love. Instead, they thought only of *themselves* in the greediest way possible. My mother's death was treated as *their loss* and they anointed themselves keepers of their very sick shrine. And then, even worse, they sought through their devious means to perpetuate that shrine on my brother and myself for most of our lives.

But you, you were a victim of these manipulations and you already had your own issues with your mother, your brother and my mother. When my mother died you were still in the process of trying to find out what it meant to be sisters since your mother destroyed that during your childhood by creating jealousy, rivalries and making my mother the exalted princess while ignoring you. That kind of thing takes *years* to work out. So just as you're working it out, my mother dies, and you not only lose a sister, but then are slapped with the indignity of having the favored sister now lifted to saint-like status hitting you with the horror and pain of your childhood all over again. It's a miracle you can function on any level actually.

So you see, all these things, these possessions, they are not the issue. If there's more than I want it, because I want the pain of it doled out visit after visit stopped. As I said, my mother is with me in my heart where it counts.

Obviously none of this stuff should have happened, but at the same time, it took far too long for those responsible to even begin to acknowledge what they did.

But I am not so hard-hearted as to think we can't move past this.